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ABSTRACT

An effort was made to expand parents' comprehension of developmentally appropriate programs through increased understanding of teacher observation in the early childhood classroom and teacher anecdotal reporting in family conferences. Corollary aims were to increase knowledge of children's learning styles to enable better school choices, and to encourage parent attendance at educational decision-making workshops. The setting was a racially mixed inner-city preschool demonstration program of 135 children in a large Northeast urban school system. Six workshops were held to introduce developmentally appropriate programs and improve teacher observational techniques and reporting mechanisms. Partnerships involving parents, the coordinator, the director, and the practicum writer and team were established and operated as an information resource and line of exchange. The practicum demonstrated that: (1) parent training should be held together with teacher training whenever possible; (2) better informed parents make for better school choices for children; (3) parent-teacher conferences need supportive and well-understood processes and mechanisms for success; and (4) average parents are interested in managing the learning activities and choices of their children. Two figures and six tables illustrate aspects of early childhood education. Eight appendixes contain supplemental information about the inservice program and workshops, including the observation checklist, a sample questionnaire, and communications with parents. Forty-six references are included. (SLD)

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Expanding Parents' Comprehension of Developmentally Appropriate Programs Using Improved Observational Techniques and Anecdotal Recording for Better Choices

by

Ann Gaffuri

Cluster 36

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A Practicum II Report presented to
the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle
Childhood in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier:

Margaret A. Hoban

Director, North Zone Early Learning Center
Title

Boston, Massachusetts

August 15, 1992
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Ann M. Gaffuri under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Date of Final Approval of Report

Roberta Schomburg, Ph.D.
Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Expanding Parents' Comprehension of Developmentally Appropriate Programs Using Improved Observational Techniques and Anecdotal Recording for Better Learning Choices. Gaffuri, Ann., 1992: Practicum II Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Parent Involvement/Parent Training/Workshops/ Observation/ Anecdotal Reporting/Conferences

This practicum aimed to expand parents' comprehension of the child's developmentally appropriate program through the increased understanding of teacher observation in the early childhood classroom and teacher anecdotal reporting in family conferences. Two corollary aims were to increase knowledge of learning style of the children for better school choices and to encourage attendance of parents in educational decision-making workshops.

Six workshops designed to introduce developmentally appropriate programs and improve teacher observational techniques and reporting mechanisms were held during the implementation phase of this practicum. Parent partners involving parents, the coordinator, the director, and the writer and team were established and operated throughout the time serving as an information line, a resource, and an on-going line of exchange. Observation data and anecdotal reports of children's behaviors were collected from teachers and discussed by parents and teachers during the workshops using the observation checklist designed by this writer. Attendance, along with the questions of parents, teachers, and the team members, was recorded regularly by computer input stations.

Outcomes of this practicum were positive and long-reaching. All objectives were met successfully, and additional aspects for investigation were discovered in some areas. Some unexpected gains with potential long-term effects for the benefit of the school system have been identified. The data from this practicum strongly demonstrated the following: (a) parent training should be held with teacher training whenever possible; (b) appropriate choices for children are better made by informed involved parents; (c) conferences between parents and teachers need supportive, well understood processes and mechanisms for success; and (d) the average parent is interested in managing the learning activities and choices of their children.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Work Setting and Community

The work setting for this practicum was a racially balanced inner city preschool demonstration program of 135 children in a large urban school system in the Northeast. The school population was deliberately designed to reflect the three major ethnic groups in the city and therefore was always kept as one third black, one third white, and one third comprising of all others.

Architecturally, the school is one of the last of the small red brick school houses set halfway down a residential street and still surrounded by a hard top playground and rolling grass lots for urban gardening. It consists of six rather small classrooms, one office, and one central room. Oak and marble abound, but there is little in the way of a modern facility.

The school system has a population of approximately 52,000 pupils. It has 142 elementary buildings, 12 middle

schools, and 7 high schools or vocational combinations. The city is quite old, debt-ridden, and has extremely high costs in regard to bilingual, special education and busing considerations. Many of the taxpayers do not use the schools anymore, and this unfortunate circumstance has led to a cycle of poverty and transience. Four years ago when this program was instituted, it was the first full-time/ after-care facility in the city. Since then four others have used this as a model, and now these other models are scheduled to be replicated within their respective zones. Basically, each program consisted of full time teachers, paraprofessionals and surround care staff. In this setting, there were six demonstration teachers who were invited to join the staff, six paraprofessionals drawn from the local schools, and six university surround care staff provided under a grant from a local university.

From the beginning of this program, parent involvement was intense and surrounded by on-going controversy and discussion. The school's major design concept was motivated to provide for the family, which needed to participate in a program available from 7:30 in the morning until 6:00 at night. It emphasized a developmentally appropriate program but did not set in place on-going cooperative mechanisms for understanding or growth.

This program additionally provided for 3-year-olds to join the family groupings. There were no other regular

education classes for 3-year-olds in the zone or city; thus the site was both the demonstration and experimental model and responsible for designing working processes for dealing with the multitude of issues which arise for an early childhood population and its families. Because of the tender years of a majority of its students, parents were a very visible presence within the building.

The system concurrently operated a 2-year kindergarten program involving 4- and 5-year-olds in all its schools. In the past, this system has often been regarded as innovative and before its time; indeed, the identified program has been chosen as an outstanding Great City Schools program. As such, it has enjoyed much in the way of popularity but little in the way of questioning. At this time, it was a safe haven for quality education combined with an important commodity, free childcare.

Parent school liaison was event-based and had not continued its developmental nature as described in the original plan. Conferences were held with much of the originally planned reporting materials but were inconsistent as to content and reporting style from teacher to teacher. The parent group was beginning to question the lack of focus and continuity, and the teachers were expressing a realization that each operated autonomously when dealing with observations, conferences, reporting, and recommending education plans to parents. Change was also

in the air in the form of a new site plan in the near future.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is a classroom teacher of 27 years experience with a background as a reading and language coordinator and assistant principal. Two years ago, she was invited to join this program. At that time she was involved in a large elementary setting, where she had designed and participated in a developmentally appropriate open class program involving children from 6 to 9 years old. It was planned that the writer would teach a year in this demonstration program and then, along with the director, move this facility to a full elementary setting, where integration of the early childhood model and an on-going elementary, developmentally appropriate, curriculum model could meet and flourish. This integrated model opened in September of 1992. All children currently in the school had first option to participate.

Parents coming to the Early Learning Center in the past were instrumental in the start-up phase of its being, and ownership was never in question. Volunteering, involvement, and presence were easily taken for granted and capitalized upon. Much of the early and continued progress and cooperation that is still in evidence today can be directly attributed to the degree that a "family" atmosphere existed

and could be relied upon.

But the years have gone by, and new families, non-involved families, and non-beginning families were much more in evidence. They did not bring or even understand those old loyalties and the rabid devotion. Popularity also necessitated a lottery system for entry and, often, "oldtimers" who worked for years for the program's acceptance have found themselves replaced by "newcomers." Each year applications have increased dramatically, particularly since the hours of operation of the academic and after-care program offered many incentives for the working family in this city with its high cost of childcare.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Simply stated, the problem was that parents do not understand most aspects of a developmentally appropriate program; and the teacher observations, anecdotal records, and conferences did not help them make the best educational decisions for their children. Good teacher observation practices were encouraged, designed, and supported at the beginning of the model program; but their importance had never been introduced to an entire group of parents or the replacement teachers. Likewise, the teachers' anecdotal records had never been discussed with either group, although they served as the basis for most parent conferences in this school. In addition, anecdotal records had never been formally introduced to the entire staff, but rather it had been assumed that teachers in both the morning and afternoon phases of the program would use them to support their curriculum development and as a basis for parent conferences.

Accordingly, parents made decisions which often reflected inappropriate understanding of the curriculum and its features based on conferences not supported by good

anecdotal records kept by teachers. Important information was often not communicated, and too much personal judgment was, just as often, described. This led to parents having incomplete and inadequate knowledge when making educational choices and decisions for their children. The parents' inadequate comprehension of various aspects of a developmentally appropriate program and the teachers' poor observation and anecdotal reporting at conferences also hindered parents' selection of long range choices. Parents and teaching staff alike shared responsibility for these problems.

In the course of the implementation of this practicum, the writer uncovered two additional causes which impacted on this program. Evidence from past years' behavioral/learning reports and checklists suggested that the former director, an early childhood advocate and curriculum specialist, provided direct intervention in teacher/parent conferences and choices. The present administrator emphasized program growth and replication.

During the design aspect for the parent/teacher workshops, the writer also discovered that although the teachers all used the same written forms for observational purposes, no one complete method of observation or anecdotal reporting system was adhered to in any given year by any given teacher. Bits and pieces of common documents were utilized on a per case basis, resulting in a maze with

parents having no map.

If the problem were to be solved, an organized plan for introducing parents to the basic tenets of a developmentally appropriate program which specifically included how children grow and how they developed as learners was needed. An emphasis would be placed on making choices which best matched a child's style of learning and the overall importance of good matches for children. Teachers' observations and anecdotal reports that provide insight into learning styles and behaviors would be invaluable for the parent conferences. Clear nonjudgmental reports will enhance parent understandings. Additionally, parents and staff would cooperatively develop and participate in training opportunities in observation and anecdotal reporting. Early practice at making choices, and parent field trips to various sites for program comparison and discussion, would also be offered.

Parents had to reach through a multitude of conflicting and even hazy reports and conversations to obtain a picture of their child's functioning in a program. Although involved, they often received only the picture presented on a daily basis of the child in this program. Concerns initially were for the child's happiness, his adjustment to attending and his ability to make the home-to-school transition. For a program with a full day length, this in itself was extremely traumatic. And this trauma could

be evident in the child, the parent or both.

At the same time, the program was also blending 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds and parents who had no experience, little experience, and 2 or 3 years' experience into one family grouping. Bridges and connections needed to be designed to inform the new members of the family, support those with some operational experience, and extend the impact of those who had been part of it. Each group had questions, concerns, and priority items which would need to be addressed; but; there were many instances where overlap or decisions had previously been made. The school department and its teachers were not necessarily the answer but, rather, informed and experienced partners could become both a testing and questioning support network for all parents involved in the school.

Some teachers in the program could also straddle both sides of our problem, but the majority could not and needed an organized approach to using reporting materials for their parent conferences. Providing a learning setting at a minimal cost meant investigating talent at hand, system offerings, and grant and fund-supported activities. A joint venture inclusive of all groups seemed to be called for and with a will the parents and teachers brainstormed possibilities. Access to university personnel and voluntary agencies was extended and cultivated.

In the course of seeking means of solving the problem,

it was easily discovered why parents did not understand most aspects of a developmentally appropriate program and why teachers were not using observations and anecdotal records in their conferences to support educational decisions. For parents, a lack of exposure to programmatic aspects was a glaring fault of this system. For teachers, little or no common experience with the reporting tools was the operational reality. Any number of strategies which exposed parents and teachers together to excellent developmental programs and their included observational and anecdotal reporting aspects would have alleviated the basic causes and encouraged acquisition of knowledge for choice. Involvement by both groups would additionally serve as a support mechanism for further growth and advocacy.

Problem Documentation

Each year an open-ended panel met to talk its way through an end-of-the-year review. All parents and interested persons come to be heard in the hope that things which were important were not missed. For 3 years running parents of children who moved out of the school came back to report poor school choice, initial unhappiness with their new school, and incredibility with the differences encountered in reporting mechanisms. Thankfully they have also reported gradual adjustment and success, but their

feelings of being abandoned during choice and program comprehension sessions have been documented.

When further investigated by the whole committee, the reports on these children indicated that 10 out of 20 had anecdotal reports which were not helpful, held little pertinent information, and whose observational practices needed improvement. Additional questioning of 5 of the 10 parents indicated that they did not then or now understand a developmental curriculum in operation. They had no reason to choose one class over another and had chosen the Early Learning Center program for its convenience and childcare. A questionnaire designed by the school department, which assessed parental knowledge of the program and provided an opportunity to ask questions, indicated confusion and lack of knowledge (see Appendix A).

During registration, 172 parents were interviewed and concerns were noted in the following 4 categories: childcare, curriculum, safety and system advantages. Interest in curriculum and system advantages was minimal, but childcare and safety concerns were overwhelming.

Locally the in-building parent coordinator had indicated that parents were willing and interested in making both short- and long-term educational choices but probably would not do so unless forced. Letting the teachers or the system's computers give them assignments was accepted practice. Acquiring knowledge of the present program for

future use did not seem important to them.

Teacher discussion sessions held monthly were invariably drawn to the topic of lack of parental involvement in educational aspects. Full-time care and the school's responsibility for childhood behavior and safety were undermining professional feelings of worth and program merit.

Causative Analysis

The school system supported different approaches to introducing its many different families and their children to education but did not globally introduce or explain these approaches as to their ramifications in the classroom. Thus it is that children entering the system for the first time at the kindergarten level were offered a variety of programs but, seemingly more important, a variety of locations of schools. Neighborhood, magnet, special program, and invitation schools were explained in some detail; but it is location and childcare which had been the focus for the beginning parent. This is especially true when the child is 3, 4, or 5 years of age and has to come by bus. For the system, meeting the federal guidelines of a desegregation law was all important. A good learning match is therefore a secondary priority.

Although many aspects of developmentally appropriate programs appeared in a variety of other early childhood

and kindergarten programs, this staid old system had not bandied about this description with great fervor or commitment. Rather it has been viewed as a sort of "liberal" upscale kind of childrearing notion which could easily be carried too far. Detailed explanations of most approaches were not forthcoming, but certainly this newest of upstarts was not being defended or introduced heartily. In addition, "traditional" kindergarten, and 2 years of it, was regarded as all that anyone should need and quite progressive. Satisfaction with the existing programs was evident and change was viewed as problematic in itself.

Although surrounded by numerous institutions of higher learning, the city had not provided on-going professional development practices for its teachers of young children which emphasized quality observation and good anecdotal reporting for conference and planning purposes. Taking advantage of school and university pairings was for many a social and/or student teacher situation which did little with needs assessment and faculty strengths or weaknesses. Problem solving and faculty exchange was not in place.

Most kindergarten programs have not changed over the years, and preschool is regarded as somewhere between babysitting and daycare. Most of the prescribed evaluations for teachers of young children are still demanding of their abilities to be eternal actors or demonstrators and to maintain attention and control. Thus the teachers

are still being measured by one scale of performance, yet often denied the time and training to profit by another, watching how children learn.

Serious attention to research findings, knowledge and use of associations and university pairings, evident change mechanisms and general system-wide support for conferences and regional and national association have not been encouraged. When these items are addressed, senior administrative staff became involved and a trickle-down theory was utilized. Unlike the elementary division of this system, even peer exchange and mentoring were just barely beginning.

Specifically, in regard to causative factors, teachers were not writing good anecdotal reports based on quality observations of children in this developmental program, parents did not understand nor extrapolate pertinent information in regard to their child's educational functioning and growth, the system did not explain or direct parent options based on educational philosophy or family values, and next level advocacy was not understood or encouraged.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Review of the literature provides evidence of the importance of an overall comprehensive understanding of how children grow and learn, the paramount importance of family wellness, bonding and empowerment, and the ramifi-

cations of the degree of bonding between the teaching staff, the parents, and the choices they make for themselves and their interaction. In all these factors, it is the cross-referencing which makes for strength. The literature, whether it is of the research based monograph according to Ferguson (1987) or the current family magazine variety, also emphasizes joint staff and parent training for socialized interaction and parental and staff autonomy building as healthy for discussion and choice making.

Parents must possess appropriate self-worth feelings which, when combined with their self-image as a parent, help them to carry out the parent-as-a-model role which the school and society expect. But herein lies a dilemma. Teachers are not trained to work with adults or parents (Ost, 1988). Rich (1988) further indicated that making parents operational is not their focus.

Seefeldt (1985) stated that when parental involvement is specifically designed to benefit the parents and is sensitive to the needs of families, improved self-worth is an outcome which can be further enhanced through the teacher's sensitive use of language.

Bermudez and Padron (1988) described how teacher-initiated contacts with families promote parent and school partnerships with long-lasting effects on children. When teachers communicate effectively with parents, they assist in increasing the parents' social and personal skills.

Children view these things in an operational context and through successive approximations and limitations adopt them. The language and manner of intercourse is also extremely influenced by these exchanges.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) investigated human ecology and mutual accommodation between a growing human being and his immediate setting. The National Association of Education of Young Children (1989) has delineated basic practices and positions for early childhood education based on many of his findings. This type of clear easily understood, comparative statement belongs in the hands of all professionals and parents. It is not available, and many parents and teachers do not know of its existence.

Although first-time parenting can be exciting and challenging, Swick (1988) noted that parents who have knowledge of child development are more effective and more able to look at their own experiences in a new light and prevent perhaps somewhat rigid reenactments of their own childhood. For a number of parents coming from their own abusive situations, this preview of their actions with their children provides hope for change.

Here teachers with similar child development knowledge could provide effective assistance which extended school learning into the home arena. Dean (1982) discussed how parents learn about their children from other parents and teachers and how this extended contact helps parents gain

satisfaction from helping shape school policy. On a variety of levels parents need to be involved in schools if they are going to develop the competencies discussed by Powell (1989), which will help them deal with all other societal institutions. Sleeter and Grant (1988) revealed that most teachers do not know how to involve parents, and particularly minority parents with a low education level. The opposite--the parent with a high education or socio-economic level--also makes teachers feel inadequate, according to Greenberg (1989).

Likewise, in the President's agenda for school reform, Carver and Salganik (1991) called upon parents to participate in an autonomous and informed manner in educational decisions that could hardly be implemented without knowledge, training, and participation. Reipe (1990) identified the first step to more effective parent communication as the identification of the communication barriers.

Castor (1989) further stated that teachers are specifically saying that parental involvement is the single most important factor in improving scholastic achievement of children. Social and emotional aspects of a child's development are enhanced, and the ongoing and entwining nature of family involvement helps build a child's self-esteem which, in turn, greatly reduces discipline problems. Motivational growth is also enhanced through the degree that teachers and parents respect each other, and this is

perceived by their children (Greenberg, 1989).

Fannin (1987), has also taken Bronfenbrenner's concept and carried it along a logical course, advocating for support measures to insure greater and increasing family wellness. But here, a problem arises between the government's and leading advocates' knowledge of what is good for families and children and non-operational or nonexistent programs. Link programs are what we demand! And whether they are social, emotional, academic or financial, they are the connectives that Bronfenbrenner (1985) discussed when he noted their importance both behaviorally as well as academically.

The needs of the community are not being met, and authority and accountability levels are inappropriate according to Mitchell (1985). Family wellness has gotten lost in its individual components rather than being viewed as an overall objective. Strong, active, involved families provide just that kind of supportive, vine-like structure which enables all family members to be both seeking and unsure and demanding and positive.

Because no parent survey with regard to attitudes about choosing schools and no instrument has been offered, Clinchy (1987) indicated the existence of a gaping hole in our understanding of the developmental fabric of the problem. Ferguson (1987) provided us with descriptions of exemplary parent information strategies which had not

been utilized to insure that some were considered. Here it was noticeable that not many had been utilized to date in this setting.

Teachers who have not been trained to work with families, for instance, can hardly give guidelines on parenting, communicate effectively from the start, and visualize parents as valued partners. Yet many do provide sensitive, professional, and respectful communication which could increasingly be utilized with families who are diverse and active. This is the beginning of an expanding movement to assist with school attendance, peer relationships and academic performance. Children whose parents involved themselves in school at almost any level or degree showed an increase in developmental gains, language and motor skills, concepts and problem solving according to (Swick, 1988). Riepe (1990) noted that it is rewarding to observe the way children have improved as a result of cooperative efforts between parent and teacher. Overall, teachers who were taught to support the concept of family wellness have helped to strengthen a variety of family systems.

Specifically, the literature leads one to conclude that knowing how children grow and learn, information in regard to the operational behavior in a specific program, family empowerment and staff comprehensive training and overall exchange of knowledge and direction can lead to good decisions for children which help lead them to success.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and objectives were projected for this practicum. The first goal of the practicum was the expansion of the information base for parents in their understanding of developmental programs. A related aspect of this goal was that parents learn to make informed choices for next step programs as a result of this information. Secondly, parents and teachers would expand their communication competency through improved observation techniques, better anecdotal record keeping practices, and mutually understood conference implications. Specific objectives included introducing literature comparing and contrasting appropriate developmental practices, group discussions of specific program models, and exploration of both contents and representative sites within the actual city system. During the 10-month implementation period teachers and parents received direct training in the purpose and kind of observation which was most valuable, how and why it was conducted, and how it led to improved curriculum planning. From that standpoint, they explored

anecdotal reporting and its major emphasis on reporting actual events in a nonjudgmental manner. Eventually, the implications of appropriate teacher observation techniques, coupled with clear anecdotal reporting, led to conferences and the parent-teacher exchange which best described a child's school operation.

Two additional goals were projected for this practicum. Parents of children new to the Early Learning Center needed to be introduced and form some kind of partnership with parents who had experienced the program in the past. In this way, the year-round information exchange did not continually need a complete overhaul or introduction. Additionally an information cadre was formed so that a range of presentation of information and opinion could be experienced by present and succeeding groups of parents and teachers. This provided access to research and alternative methods. The cadre represented as broad a spectrum of the school community as possible.

Performance Objectives

The following five performance objectives were designed for this practicum:

Objective 1: The six teachers in the Early Learning Center would demonstrate proficiency in good observational practices and appropriate anecdotal record keeping subsequent to participating in provided in-service training

through a state-sponsored in-service grant (see Appendix B).

Objective 2: At least 25 parents would attend monthly information meetings which would focus on developmentally appropriate practices and observation and anecdotal reporting in use. Parents and teachers together would practice using these techniques in a nonthreatening group atmosphere.

Objective 3: All parents seeking a parent partner would be matched through a lottery system.

Objective 4: An information cadre would be formed utilizing parents, district office support staff, university pairings and curriculum council members to provide broad based local information at meetings and workshops.

Objective 5: When given choices as to next grade placement, parents involved in the workshops would demonstrate explicit knowledge prior to coming to a decision.

Measurement of Objectives

Objective 1 was measured subsequent to parent and teacher observational technique and anecdotal record keeping training provided by a state in-service grant by means of a blindcross critique of each other's records on at least three occasions using a checklist developed in class (see Appendix C).

This checklist type of measurement enabled all partici-

pants to continually recognize and highlight good practices and see the connections made between observations, reports and conference sharing of important information. Data checklists allowed each workshop participant, independently and together, to affirm their skills at observing the growth and patterns observable in the children before them. This, in turn, provided concrete information for teachers' anecdotal reports, which produced valuable information and insights to parents looking for guidance and support in their quest for proper educational situations for their children.

Objective 2 was measured by using a computer sign-in situation which not only delineated who came to a meeting, but also, gave each member an opportunity to note questions or indicate high- or low-interest topics and outside factors. Two computer terminals were available before and after meetings, and one always had an operator to assist operation.

This particular measurement tool was chosen as it indicated the exact attendance for each session while introducing non-personal interactive technology. Comprehension of the model program and an opportunity to respond in an indirect manner with questions or comments were invaluable for personal and social effects.

Objective 3 was measured by the matches made for initial respondents and general interviews conducted each

month concerning the number of times the parent partners independently utilized the pairings. Matches which proved inappropriate or unmanageable for any reason were changed by the parent coordinator upon request or knowledge. A log on the kinds of exchanges was kept to determine improvement opportunities for future matches (see Appendix D).

The writer utilized this tool because it allowed her the opportunity to view the types of exchanges occurring and their implications for continuing school restructuring. Parent involvement concerns in an evolving program were of particular interest for this program at this time. Singly, and together, the matches and usage of parent partners and the match log kept by the parent coordinator were compared and indicated strengths and/or weaknesses unforeseen both for this practicum and for the school program in general.

Objective 4 was measured by the agreement of at least six members of the following groups to participate on a monthly rotating basis as "local" information sources: parents, district office support staff, university pairing staff, and teacher or curriculum council member. Two members of the information cadre would be present at each monthly meeting.

This type of organizational tool or body was instigated after hearty recruitment in each of the above mentioned groups because of the program's deep involvement on an everyday level with a multitude of diverse staffing compo-

nents. It also provided varied opportunity to incorporate excellence in all forms in researching and practicing to meet our needs. Likewise, the cadre presence and interaction reflected a measure of authenticity. Its own internal problem-solving and exchange mechanism provided an opportunity to discover if this type of in-house back-up grouping, combined with good in-service training, met the needs of a school with a problem.

Objective 5 was measured by means of a comparison checklist of pre-mean responses to preselected comprehension of developmentally appropriate program statements and post-mean responses to similar statements. Comparison checklists of pre- and post-mean comprehension items provided the "bare-bones" information as to the degree of understanding evident in the cooperative group assembled. Evidence of desired behavior was a doubling of the original mean responses. Parents who still exhibited choice or comprehension problems as to choice were offered additional cadre or director meeting and intervention time prior to making written application for the next year.

This type of measurement tool was chosen to determine if a change in knowledge or behavior following the implementation was apparent. Additional intervention time was provided deliberately so that a security factor could operate efficiently before final application choices were made.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem encountered was that parents did not understand most aspects of a developmentally appropriate program, and the observations and anecdotal records written by teachers for conferences were not helping parents make the best decisions for their children. The school system assumed that all teachers had adequate mastery over this aspect of parent information-giving, but in fact few had been formally introduced to training in observation coupled with an anecdotal style of reporting in the educational setting. Parents also had entered this program with ideas of its bright and appealing circumstances but no real understanding of different program models generally and specifically no comparison models for everyday operation. Oftentimes because the program served the family need for full daycare, these considerations took second place, until the first conference or when a child had to relocate, or was promoted out of this setting. Then, decisions were at hand and the school department had no established vehicle to help. A general information bulletin which provided

location, course offerings and building size material but did nothing to explain commitment to philosophy and/or operational programs, was available.

Although much of the recent literature had indicated that workshops were an appropriate vehicle for information dissemination (NAEYC, 1988; Smylie & Conyers, 1991), this method in itself did not seem like an inviting manner to attack a problem which encompassed two distinct groups, the parents and the teachers. The writer agreed and felt that too often these groups allowed separate training to increase the distance between them.

Warm (1990), implementing a practicum intervention which evaluated and determined the most and least effective activities and materials in each part of a five-series in-service course, stated that skills teachers need are often the same ones needed by parents. That training which promotes parental involvement and fosters communication should include local policies, family background, effective communication skills, effective parent teacher conferences, and continued methods for increasing home-school cooperation. The writer agreed with these conclusions and feels that they are indicative of the need for joint development after efficient cooperative planning as the best scenario. A number of program considerations suggested by Carver and Salganik (1991), Fannin (1987), and Schleicher (1984) involving parent solutions which introduced alternatives

such as joint sessions, developing a presence of autonomy and cooperative efforts seem more appropriate. It is particularly important that the autonomy issue be explored and validated for parents and teachers because in many cases it lacks actuality or validation in this system.

Ouchi (1981) revealed that the elimination of separate but equal training models can be accomplished by using a Theory Z approach to the overall management problem. The integration and acceptance of the parents and staff into one operational entity for the benefit of the child's welfare thus becomes a personnel policy of inclusion whereby each contributes his or her best effort.

This combination of individual best effort and reduced cost control, two seemingly disjointed ideas, are particularly attractive to an educational setting. Incidentally, the first lesson of Theory Z management is trust, a commodity, which must be in place in this restructured school environment.

Likewise, Peterson (1984), Mitchell (1985), Clinchy (1987), and Ferguson (1987) indicated that it is very likely that the school staff would continue making school choices, and all the ramifications needed to make good ones would become an information service of the staff. They would, over time, generate multiple means of operationalizing this project to supplant information given by the system at large. Thus, long-range teacher/parent input

would conceivably be generated and sustained. Multiple means of operationalizing this project would eventually supplant scanty information given by the system. Initially this kind of long range planning also developed the system's long-range planning skills whereby the system as a whole profits. Cooperative learning is NOT just for kids!

Just as parents are important as models, they are also, according to Kantrowitz (1991), important as prime perceptors of a child's perceptions of the world around him. A sensitive parent is crucial in encouraging a child's sense of morality and values. This concept of family values, morals, and concerns enters into the type of program parents choose for their children. It is often not as clear-cut as choosing whole language or a computer experience. Translating this into parental and staff information, of necessity, falls to the professional educator or the system. Kantrowitz did not indicate the how and wherefore of this problem; but, nevertheless, raised the all important issues of its being totally neglected.

The writer believes that teachers everywhere know this to be one of the most important aspects of positive functioning for children. Who you are, where you come from, and what your family holds as important are perhaps some of the keystones of the developing child.

Hamlin (1987) argued for the program which increases

the number of parent-staff contacts and the formation of some sort of early education council to bridge the work of preschool or public school communities and the home. Additionally, she indicated that the resulting advocacy positions for these communities are strengthened.

Again, this writer discovered in her investigations that many of the so-called "leaders" of the early childhood movement are often people who started as parents and teachers with a cause. Evidently, public advocacy was increased as a result of early experience with the institution we call school.

Collaboration efforts between Head Start and a family preschool program, although emphasizing the improvement of services to handicapped children, the quality of parent involvement, and opportunities for mainstreaming, led Cooper (1985) to a primary design used to train parent volunteers to work in Head Start classrooms. A series of field trips or group visits to early childhood programs both enriches the participating parents' programs and enlarges their information background in regard to program specifics. This is consistent evidence of exposure along with knowledge of what is, in order to plan for what could be.

The writer decided to incorporate this on-site presentation/visitation in combination with the existing general visitation policy extended by the school system.

Clift (1981) indicated that for parents and teachers to develop new observational skills, they need time to stand back and look at children apart from their day-to-day involvement. The ability to understand children through observation might be compared to fine art. We all respond to it, but the person with experience and training can better assess the value of a work of art. Likewise, we form impressions of children, but the inexperienced observer, stated Boehm (1977), may be inaccurate, biased, or limited in scope.

With practice, Rowan (1973) believed we learn to use a variety of techniques to gain understanding of the particular combination of attitudes, abilities, and traits that make up the uniqueness of each child. Furthermore, Wright (1967) emphatically indicated that the degree to which we note these combinations and use them in our conferencing and assignments is the degree to which good matches will be made with programs.

Description of Selected Solution

Evaluation of the solutions reported in the literature indicates that joint programs should be offered to parents and teachers whenever possible, supplemented by professional in-service programs dealing with purely academic concerns. Programs rich in sharing opportunities, increased contact and exchange, and those fostering

communication of all kinds should be implemented. In addition, opportunities to develop and sustain individual and group autonomy not only make each group and its members healthy; but often, lead to the groups' developing some worthwhile advocacy positions. Theory Z management particulars increase the probability of lower costs and unification of the interests of the parents and staff members. Inviting parents into schools, making programs accessible, and group visits enlarge the practical experience of all participants.

A joint workshop under the auspices of a state grant was offered to parents and staff in order to improve communication skills and increase knowledge as to individual children's programmatic needs. The focus here was understanding the whys and hows of good observation practices, the writing of practical informative anecdotal records and the cooperative exchange in the conference setting of important information.

During the registration process each spring, a series of field experiences are offered in order to introduce the next step choices to parents in the zone. In this particular zone 46 elementary schools and the early learning center were open for this visiting. Because of its wide-flung location on both sides of the harbor, buses from central transportation ran on a half-hour schedule between each of five identified program model buildings.

Like programs were grouped together for identification purposes, and a week's open house for all schools followed "trip week." Prior to this registration week visiting, group visits were arranged through the parent coordinator for those parents of children in grade one who were looking for an appropriate grade two placement within the zone.

Utilizing a philosophy which gave time to practice, established trust among its members, valued its participants, and permitted development of wholistic relationships to occur meant that an integrated team approach had been put into practice (Ouchi, 1981). According to Hamlin (1987) and Kantrowitz (1991), parent partners and exchanges further facilitate use of the system and the services it provides.

Given the current economy, the writer believes that the following solutions in their adapted form offered from the literature can be implemented in the identified work setting. These solutions could improve parents' knowledge of developmentally appropriate programs, provide increased appropriate teacher observations and better written anecdotal reports, and contribute to better choices being made for placement.

Using the tabulated results of the system's questionnaire, develop a series of workshops to introduce developmentally appropriate programs, observation methods and anecdotal recording for conferences. These topics will

be integrated with the information cadre as a delivery vehicle.

Establish a cadre which has no line-item cost base but relies on interest and association of members from various participatory groups. Members may join, be nominated, or be asked to join by the initiating committee comprised of the director, the parent coordinator, the community superintendent or this writer.

Introduce two workshops on choice to be staffed by the department of assignments and participate in the zone program for visiting schools. For this practicum the additional use of two "donated" buses for early group visits was planned by the parent coordinator and the writer.

During the first workshop meeting, introduce and run the lottery, which makes connections internally between parents attending who are at various degrees of knowledge of the program. Invite all parents associated with the early learning center to attend any phase of the program via the school newspaper and encourage bringing a friend/another parent.

Report of Action Taken

Prior to the implementation of this practicum, certain procedures were determined.

1. The outline and its entirety was shared and discussed with the director, parent coordinator and com-

munity superintendent prior to the beginning of the 1991 school year.

2. All reference materials collected were also duplicated and shared.

3. Tabulated checklists from the previous school year were duplicated and distributed to the initiating group.

4. Newspaper and in-house notices were submitted to the community superintendent's office for approval (see Appendix E).

5. A fact sheet for the superintendent of schools targeting increased parental and community participation as part of the whole school's annual education plan was developed.

The following timeline was put in place for the period of the 11 months of the implementation:

Following an initial meeting between recruited cadre members and administrative staff, an invitation went out to the school community for registration. Cadre members had met on three previous occasions and specifically agreed to introduce individual aspects of the training. In addition, a mechanism for getting out notices and responding to concerns, as well as scheduled meeting time, was agreed upon. During this first month, meeting space, room design, materials and technological necessities were obtained. The director interacted in all these levels in order to determine the facilitating teacher's responsibilities from a

delivery point and her understanding of the training, projections and issues which participants might generate.

Introduction Phase

The second step of the solution strategy was to introduce the overall program at an open information meeting for parents and staff. An outline was projected and a description of the upcoming parent partner lottery was discussed. Specific examples of parent partner operation were role-played with members of the cadre and aftercare staff participating. Registration for the training modules was finalized at the conclusion of this meeting and times, places and alternatives were confirmed.

Transition Phase

During the first officially registered meeting the lottery was run and parent partnerships were made. A short social exchange was encouraged and then the official training began. Parents and teachers were introduced to an overall view of developmentally appropriate curriculum for this level through discussion, the NAEYC policy statement, and a comparison of what is and what should be. At the conclusion of the meeting a brief computer-assisted attendance program was introduced and its anonymous question and reference aspects explained. The parent coordinator distributed the exchange log and began the

first interviews with partners (see Appendix D).

Implementation Phase

During this phase of the practicum parents and teachers were involved with the active investigation of observation and anecdotal recording practices. This necessitated small group visits to the classrooms or play settings, use of the observational checklist, and brief descriptions of the action observed. Blind cross exchange of these checklists enabled the at-large group to hone their skills and recognize important aspects of both the observation and the resulting anecdotes. This aspect of the training continued for 7 of the 11 months of implementation and provided a basis for most of the conferencing, discussion on learning style, and programmatic choice. Parent exchange was briefly discussed at the conclusion of this meeting and interviews for the log were randomly conducted.

Approximation Phase

The fifth month of the program engaged all participants in a workshop exploring communication in general and conferences in particular. At this time the group explored some small group strategies which provided for an introductory overview of the topics, breakup into discussion or interest areas, and a conclusionary whole group discussion. Both advocacy positions and management of the process were

becoming topics which now interested the participants as a whole. Continued parent exchange had now developed so that interaction was regular among most members and coalitions and networks seemed to be in a formative stage. The log exchange did much to encourage this.

Much of the writer's time at this point was spent in serving as a conduit for the emerging groups and affiliations. Computer-generated questions and opinions in particular needed printing and forwarding to the appropriate persons, and utilization of the log by the parents and teachers had by now been discovered. Active management of the entirety was handled by the director and the writer in consort.

Integration Phase

During the sixth month's meeting, groups--rather than individuals--investigated funding, solutions and program alternatives and presented their findings to the whole. Observations and anecdotal reporting continued, and this exchange and conference became a highlight of the sessions since it directly but anonymously involved the children. First-time advocacy positions were discovered as well as numerous evidence of the beginnings of the possibilities of involvement in school policy.

During the seventh and eighth month field trips to the various program sites began and specific choice classrooms

were designated and appointments made. Roundtable discussions led by cadre members followed each group trip, and the offerings of the school system were discussed by members of the department of assignments and cadre members. Because of the existence of a court order under the desegregation plan, only those offerings which contributed to the order could be implemented. This necessitated a variety of investigative procedures ascertaining both the rights and accessibilities for each individual family. Long after the meetings were over, this department was hard at work making the necessary legal matches which provided the widest possible choices for participating families.

Conclusionary Phase

As part of the conclusionary phase, trends in observation, reporting, and conferencing of all ages were presented to the group. Parents who still had continuing problems of choice were invited to a private meeting with the staff or the director, and final observations, reports and a log telephone exchange were accomplished.

The tenth month of the practicum implementation initiated a small volunteer group into the review process of the program and the developmental aspects of a handout on observation practices, anecdotal reporting, and conferencing for distribution on a city-wide basis. This handout was requested by the superintendent of schools as part of

her annual review of programs of excellence. General overview and timelines were established, and tasks appropriated. The final monthly meeting was a double one in which the committee collected and reviewed all existing materials and made revisions as to form, style and content. The second meeting provided for final review prior to submitting a printed form to the superintendent for inclusion in the 1992-1993 school information packet.

This year the 11-month practicum described was implemented at one early learning site in an attempt to introduce parents to a developmentally appropriate curriculum, good observational techniques, and anecdotal reporting for improved conferencing. Knowledge, experience, and an opportunity to interact with the program and its many attributes were provided in order that improved choices based on a child's unique learning style, family values, and system opportunities might be provided. Social interaction between adults, improved school performance for children, and increased teacher feelings of worth were expected and noted.

Deviations

During the 11-month implementation, two significant deviations were encountered. One unexpected event was the strong advocacy positions generated by the group and which eventually came to focus on the imminent relocation of this

program. Although exploration of the practicum specifics continued to be the main focus, this same exploration mode introduced many members to the possibilities within the system and their role in duplicating or obtaining them at the new site. Thus many group members became the active parents legally designated to investigate the next site move. Choice in program training now served as both a stimulant for personal action and a watchdog in group decision-making. The system applauded the first and seemed quite taken aback by the second.

Likewise, the teachers who had until now held only dues-paying membership in their union increasingly became active, proactive, and demonstrative members. A faculty senate was initiated in mid-year and functioned in its capacity as part of educational policy development. At the final meeting of this body in June, the group unanimously voted to seek a school-based management form of operation for the 1992-1993 school year. Once again, choice and advocacy exploration seemed to lead to a different level of involvement.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISSEMINATION

Results

The problem that existed in this writer's work setting was that parents did not understand the existing developmentally appropriate program and teachers were not writing good supportive anecdotal records as a result of poor observation practices. This led to inadequate information being exchanged at parent conferences and poor choices for short- and long-term educational decisions. Specifically, they were spending a great deal of time throughout the year discussing behavior and individual pieces of work and very little time identifying learning styles and apparent learning growth and operation within the classroom.

The solution to this problem was to use a cooperative training model to reintroduce developmentally appropriate program specifics along with good observation practices and well written anecdotal records. Joint practice and blind review and exchange of the observations and anecdotal records provided for improvement and discussion. A diversified team of professionals introduced these topics under the auspices of a state grant and an on-going parent

partnership vehicle provided for support and carry-over.

The goal of using the cooperative training model was two-fold: to provide training for parents and teachers in a setting in which mutual support and social/educational action could flourish, and to reduce the cost factor while developing interdependence in learning objectives and understandings. This gave each group both the opportunity and the necessity to comprehend the importance of intercommunication and the safe atmosphere and topic within which they could maneuver.

Using a multi-diversified team to provide training and direction allowed each component member to bring an expertise and understanding to the program which impacted on it and needed to be heard. Consensus building--but most of all, a consensus of understanding--clarified present issues and provided building space for future interaction. In addition, talent in many forms could be utilized for the best possible results.

Parent partnerships for support and carry-over provided significant social growth for many adults while lending emotional support to those participants, both parents and teachers, with considerably less confidence. This gave many parents their first opportunity to become a part of the active decision-making body of the school system and to identify themselves with choice and responsibility beyond the home and classroom.

The following specific objectives were designed to achieve these goals. Each objective includes and indicates results obtained through the evaluation plans:

Objective 1: During the 10-month implementation period the parents, teachers, and members of the information cadre demonstrated their increasing understanding and ability to use and explain good observation practices. They subsequently learned to write concise nonjudgmental anecdotal reports, which provided important information regarding children's growth and operation in the school setting. Using the checklist developed in class, the entire group gradually role-played conference situations and were able to comprehend the fine nuances involved in translating observation, reporting, and planning into choice and learning decisions.

Table 1. Parents' Use of Observation/Anecdotal Report First Attempt

Total Number of Children Playing		7
Total Number of Parents Observing (3 at any one time)		24
Ability to Use the Checklist	Mastery 13	Percentage 55%

Table 2. Parents' Use of Observation/Anecdotal Report Second Attempt

Total Number of Children Playing		7
Total Number of Parents Observing (3 at any one time)		24
Ability to Use the Checklist	Mastery 19	Percentage 79%

Table 3. Parents' Use of Observation/Anecdotal Report Third Attempt

Total Number of Children Playing		6
Total Number of Parents Observing (3 at any one time)		24
Ability to Use the Checklist	Mastery 17	Percentage 71%

Table 4. Teachers' Use of Observation/Anecdotal Report First Attempt

Total Number of Children Playing		7
Total Number of Teachers Observing (3 at any one time)		9
Ability to Use the Checklist	Mastery 6	Percentage 67%

Table 5. Teachers' Use of Observation/Anecdotal Report Second Attempt

Total Number of Children Playing		9
Total Number of Teachers Observing (3 at any one time)		9
Ability to Use the Checklist	Mastery 7	Percentage 78%

Table 6. Teachers' Use of Observation/Anecdotal Report Third Attempt

Total Number of Children Playing		12
Total Number of Teachers Observing (3 at any one time)		9
Ability to Use the Checklist	Mastery 8	Percentage 89%

The tables on pages 44-46 identify increasing familiarity and control of the checklist and improved anecdotal record keeping for both teachers and parents who attended the training workshops provided by a state grant.

Objective 2: During the 10-month implementation of this practicum, 24 parents attended all sessions, 7 parents missed 2 sessions, and 4 parents missed 3 sessions. The tables listed in Objective 1 provide information for performance for those parents who attended all sessions and who participated in the three blindcross critiques of each other's records using the checklist developed in class.

Objective 3: During the 10-month implementation of this practicum, 17 parents who attended the sessions asked for and were mateched with a parent with equal or more extensive experience at the Early Learning Center. Nine additional parents who could not attend the sessions were also matched, and all 26 continued to function as partners for the year. Altogether, 52 parents of the 112 (46%) participated in this partnering experience. General interviews indicated that most partners initially used the partnership once a month for the first 3 months and anywhere from 3 to 7 times a month afterwards as familiarity and involvement in the program grew.

Objective 4: During the 10-month implementation of this practicum, an information cadre met in order to provide the basis for the parent/teacher training and as a general resource. Three parents, two district office support persons, a university staff member, and two curriculum council members agreed to participate on a rotating basis. In addition, the director, another principal, the community superintendent, and the writer also became part of the cadre. The director, the in-house parent coordinator, and this writer were present at all sessions.

Objective 5: During the 10-month implementation of this practicum, parents were invited to explore specific aspects of developmentally appropriate curriculum with the current staff of the Early Learning Center. Using the

National Association for the Education of Young Children policy statement as a guide throughout the training, they were easily able to identify those programs which best exemplified their choice. Four parents sought additional intervention time with the director prior to completing applications for next year's program.

Discussion

Reviewing the data produced, the writer believes that all of the objectives were achieved in this practicum. This demonstrates that the goals of expanding parents' comprehension of developmentally appropriate programs using improved teacher observational techniques and anecdotal recording for better choices were achieved. Hopefully, because of some specific design mechanisms put into place, they will continue to be addressed and achieved in the years to come.

The results confirm the writer's expectations that teachers and parents could come together to improve their conferencing skills by means of joint training in observation and anecdotal recording. They could explore the essence of developmentally appropriate programs, visit and make choices, and partnerships could be established. In addition, they could, as a group, profit from a standing information cadre with a highly diversified staff. It should be noted that McLaughlin and Shields (1987) addi-

tionally discussed educating administrators concerning the importance of empowering teachers to take the initiative in involving parents in just this type of program. Much of the growing centeredness of parent advisory councils as involved decision-participating bodies are the outcome of this type of movement. Based on the results demonstrated in each of these areas, all objectives were achieved.

Additional review of the literature revealed that others had similar positive results utilizing these strategies. Using joint groupings, Reipe (1990) observed the way children improve as a result of the cooperative efforts between parent and child. Goodman (1986) produced similar results using a whole language philosophy which emphasizes using language with all groups in all forms to build curriculum and understanding of it.

The implications of meeting the goals and objectives of this practicum now become worthy of note. Parent and teachers are aware of their power and responsibility to establish clear avenues of communication in order that programs flourish to the extent that they should. Understanding the educational program, realizing and identifying particular learning styles, and supporting growth have, indeed, become interesting ways to look at children. Whole networks and possible support systems are beginning to grow.

Specifically, the parent participants are comfortable

making choices, asking questions with regard to programs, challenging the systems' offerings, and deciding their children's futures. They attend conferences with hard questions and better understand the information that teachers want to share. In addition, they have become, on a small scale, a body of participants in the greater school operation and can bring these same strengths to the upcoming program relocation.

One unanticipated result was the degree of cohesion evident in meetings which took place prior to the program's relocation to an alternative site. It is apparent to this writer that if training for choice is provided, the choices that will be independently made may very soon need to be faced. Another result became evident within the teaching staff when, as a group, we realized how little formal training we had received in school or professionally in dealing with parents. As a major training site for teacher certification, we recognize that it is necessary for this staff to identify and correct this oversight.

Based on the results obtained from this practicum, the writer concludes that parents and teachers using improved observation practices and anecdotal reporting methods can expand parents' knowledge of developmentally appropriate programs so that excellent educational choices may be made. The writer believes that the joint investigation and the highly diversified in-house workshop staff lent a measure

of acceptance that would not have been otherwise attained.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a result of implementing this practicum:

More training and workshop opportunities should be held as joint sessions, especially when they involve educational content issues. In addition, whenever possible, line staff should be utilized as they have both the credibility and the expertise to provide such training. It may be noted that the local union organization needs to do more to advertise and promote their member teachers as "experts" available to the system.

Outside funding needs to be aggressively sought to provide support for these joint training ventures. Alternatives to strictly "educational" funding sources need investigation, and collaborative ventures should be developed with business and industry.

Attendance, payroll, and ordering procedures can be simplified by utilizing existing system technology. This also serves as training and efficiency models for many grant application procedures.

In the present program the partnerships and lottery technique should be continued and expanded for both their social and learning opportunity qualities. In addition,

their proven accommodation factor for involving parents and the carry-over effect on children necessitate their continued usage.

Maintain, use, and expand the information cadre as a no-cost, highly efficient, and effective resource unit. In particular, expansion may be in the form of needs assessment, accreditation issues, problem solving, and a "brainstorm trust." Perhaps a cloned group may be a necessity, but the pool of participants should once again be as diverse, exciting, and experienced as the original information cadre of the practicum.

Insist that the NAEYC's information and policy statements are distributed and explained each year in a formal manner. Mandatory involvement regarding observation, anecdotal reporting, and conferences should be a part of official registration procedures.

Finally, it is recommended that the teachers of the various early learning centers of the system unite in presenting a variety of information gatherings aimed at introducing developmentally appropriate programs. It is hoped that they will find themselves like Mr. Willie Nelson: "On the road again," as first-line advocates for change. Figures 1 and 2 (Dimidjian, 1989) best indicate choice and roles for the early childhood educator of tomorrow.

Figure 1
Early Childhood Tomorrow:
Coordinated Choices for Care and Education

Young Children/
Young Families
Home-based Care/Early Education
Parent-Child Early Education Cooperatives
Early Childhood Education Centers in Varied Settings with Allday or Partday Programs
Early Intervention, Head Start and Teen Parent-Child Centers
Public and Private School Systems: Early Childhood Divisions for 3-8 Year Olds
Intermediate Grades: Entering the Formal Learning Environment in Public / Private Systems
Defining Developmental Practices
Professional Organizations
State And Federal Agencies: Ensuring Developmental Programs

Note. From Early childhood at risk: Actions and advocacy for young children (pg. 46) by V. J. Dimidjian, 1989, Washington, D.C.: National Education Association. Copyright 1989 by the National Education Association. Reprinted by permission.

Figure 2
The Overlapping Roles
of the Early Childhood Educator

Note. From Early childhood at risk: Actions and advocacy for young children (pg. 50) by V. J. Dimidjian, 1989, Washington, D.C.: National Education Association. Copyright 1989 by the National Education Association. Reprinted by permission.

Dissemination

This practicum has been shared formally with the eight other teachers, the director, and the community superintendent for the North Zone of the city system. In addition, various aspects of this practicum are currently being adapted and adopted as part of the restructuring program for the newly organized early learning center. A system-wide handout will be distributed during the first professional meeting of all early childhood and kindergarten personnel of the system. It condenses and outlines good observation practices, appropriate anecdotal reporting, and their use in the conference situation. In addition, a teacher partnership lottery will be held which will pair this level staff in order to open discussion regarding teacher advocacy. A teaching exchange model has been submitted to the local early childhood conference board as well as an article to the journal, Equity and Choice.

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APPENDIX A

ELC PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

ELC Parent Questionnaire

Please help our parent group decide on upcoming topics for meetings by filling out the appropriate questions. We hope to use this information with parents new to the program and need to know where we need help.

1. Where will you find developmentally appropriate programs for young children in the city schools?

2. List three aspects of developmentally appropriate programs which should be in evidence in this type of program for young children.

3. Can you give one example of a specific aspect of your child's daily education which you consider to be developmentally appropriate for his age? Please do so.

4. What one thing have you done to extend your child's experience in a developmentally appropriate context?

5. What things have you seen in classrooms which were not developmentally appropriate or were questionable?

APPENDIX B

GRANT PROGRAM

APPENDIX B

Grant Program

Commonwealth Inservice Grant Program

September, 1991

To: _____ Early Learning Center, _____ Public Schools, _____, _____

For: Inservice Training Program-Staff Development
(Details attached to original application, form si1986)

Facilitator: Ann Gaffuri
51 Ballou Street
Quincy, MA 02169

Signature of Acceptance Ann Gaffuri

APPENDIX C

CLASS CHECKLIST

APPENDIX C

Class Checklist

1. The observation clearly notes

   who what where how

   if why is observable, please note

2. The observation clearly lists other similar actions observed in the same manner.

   yes no

3. The observation does not include extraneous details.

4. The observation deserved noting.

   yes no

1. The attached anecdote was written using observed details and is a statement of factual knowledge.

2. The attached anecdote does not make judgmental statements.

3. Personal opinions are not part of the anecdote.

4. Previous actions are used judiciously in anecdotal records.

5. A possible indicator page is attached which correlates most recent anecdotes and invites parents' comments.

APPENDIX D

PARENT PARTNER EXCHANGES

APPENDIX D

Parent Partner Exchanges

Date	Partners	Topic	Discussion
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

APPENDIX E

NOTICES

Only 30 spaces available...

Become a major part of your child's education!

The North Zone ELC is offering (6) workshops to help you increase your understanding of "your child in school".
Topics for discussion include:

Developmentally appropriate curriculum, Self- Esteem
Age appropriate responses, Whole Language,
Discipline, and School Choices

If you have not returned your registration form, please forward it to the ELC before December 15th. Workshops begin in January!

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

ONLY 30 SPOTS IN PARENT WORKSHOP

Dear Parents,

Become a major part of your child's education. The Early Learning Center is offering 6 workshops to increase your understanding of "YOUR CHILD IN SCHOOL." Topics include: Developmentally appropriate curriculum, Self-esteem, Age appropriate responses, Whole Language, Discipline and Choosing a next site placement. The workshops will begin in January. Remember places are

limited.

Save your place by returning this sheet to Ann or Peggy **IMMEDIATELY.**

Parent's Name----------

Please indicate best time and day of the week:

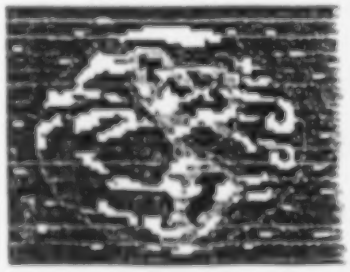
Time----------

Day----------

My child is-----years old and in ------room.

"All learning is an adventure... create worlds for your children"

Maria Montessori



APPENDIX F

ANNUAL EDUCATION PLAN

School Maryknoll E.L.C.

SUPERINTENDENT'S PRIORITY 2: ***Increased parental and community participation***

OBJECTIVE Strengthen the school-home connection of developmentally appropriate curriculum through workshops designed to explore observation, choices and parental/child interactions.

RATIONALE Parents who understand the developmentally appropriate curriculum in action and make better choices and support enhancing life long growth. ①

MEASURES OF SUCCESS ① Parent information comparison survey done in October and June

② Parent needs assessment designed by parents.

ACTION STEPS/ ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES/ SUPPORTS NEEDED	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINES	DATE COMPLETED
6 Parent Workshops	Identified parents Professional Devel. Council	Parent Coordinator- Madelena Goedum and Ann Goffuri	Dec - May	June
Parent Resources Activity Booklet	All E.L.C Staff	Maryann Malloy	Monthly starting in November	Each month
Parent Mentoring System (Lottery)	Experienced Parent Volunteers (15+)	Michelle Pless Madelyn Goedum Clara Anastas Ann Goffuri	October	all year
E.L.C 1992-93 Orientation	Total E.L.C Staff	Director - Mgt. Hoban Ann Goffuri	February - April	February - April

APPENDIX G

PARENT INVOLVEMENT FACT SHEET NO. 11

Boston Public Schools

PARENT INVOLVEMENT FACT SHEET NO. 11: 77

INVOLVING SINGLE AND WORKING PARENTS

Many children in our schools live in single parent families, step-families, foster families, and other "reconstructed" family configurations. In addition, most children live in a household in which both parents work, resulting in many children coming home from school to an empty house. Involving single and working parents, as well as non-custodial parents who may live in different cities or states, in their children's education presents many challenges to schools.

DEVELOP FLEXIBLE SCHOOL PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Many schools are developing flexible practices and policies that are accommodating the needs of students and parents in non-traditional and non-nuclear families. Policies and practices are designed to make parental involvement more feasible by facilitating the participation of single and working parents. This involvement is resulting in greater cooperation, mutual support, and understanding among parents and the school that strengthen children's school experiences.

Schools have adopted the following practices to meet the needs of single and working parents:

- Schedule parent-teacher conferences, parent organization meetings, and other activities at times when parents do not have to leave work. Many of these activities are held in late afternoons, evenings, and on weekends.

- Welcome older or younger children at parent-teacher conferences, parent organization meetings, and school events. Provide organized activities or child-care services during these events.

- Provide teachers and counselors with in-service training that helps them work with children of single and working parents. This training can sensitize them to special problems faced by students and their parents.

- Use sensitivity and creativity in communicating with single and working parents:

  - Avoid making the assumption that students live with both biological parents.

  - Avoid the traditional "Dear Parents" greeting in newsletters; use "Dear Parent," "Friends," or other forms of greeting.

  - Develop a system of keeping non-custodial parents informed of their children's school progress.

  - Telephone parents periodically to inform them of their children's progress.
  - Place flyers about school events on bulletin boards at large companies in the community.

- Notify parents when their child is disciplined at school to discuss ways parents can support the rules of the school.

- Develop approaches to supporting children's learning that are responsive to the needs of single and working parents:

  - Conduct evening workshops on the role that parents can play in their children's learning and on approaches that are successful.

  - Sponsor after-school and weekend learning activities at which parents can participate and learn with their children.

  - Involve parents in class projects through at-home and at school activities: developing a family tree; sharing a skill/profession/hobby with children's classrooms.

  - Develop certificates or rewards which parents and their children can exchange following cooperative learning activities/projects.

GATHER APPROPRIATE INFORMATION

Educators must ensure that they do not carry negative assumptions about expectations for children of single and working parents. Schools should help teachers to get information on children's home environment, recognize that family structures need not correlate with low school performance, and respect and response to parents' desire to be informed about their children's programs. Schools support teachers' understanding of their students in several ways:

- Request information on the basic facts of each student's family situation.

- Encourage parents to alert the school and teachers if changes occur in family situations.

- Request information on the names of individuals to be informed about and involved in school activities and on how to reach both of the children's parents.

- Gather information on whether joint or separate parent conferences should be scheduled with parents.

- Demonstrate sensitivity to the rights of non-custodial parents. Inform parents that schools may not withhold information from non-custodial parents, who have the legal right to see their children's records.

PROVIDE SUPPORT SERVICES

Innovative practices and policies may be effective when they are augmented with support services. These services should respond to the needs of children and their working and single parents. While some services require a commitment of additional resources from the system, others could be implemented in collaboration with community agencies.

- Provide child-care services for young children during parent-teacher conferences, parent organization meetings, and other school events.
- Devise practical ways, such as "carpooling," shuttle buses, and reimbursement vouchers, to make transportation to school events available to all parents.
- Inform parents of school programs that can provide support to their children, such as weekly group sessions conducted by school counselors on topics such as divorce, death, etc.
- Sponsor after-school care programs on the school premises.
- Arrange to have school buses stop at neighborhood child-care centers.
- Establish parent-run homework networks that provide children with after-school settings in which they can do their homework and parents can seek assistance in helping children with homework.
- Offer parent education workshops on topics such as:
  - Understanding the impact of separation and divorce on children.
  - Developing a safe and secure environment for latchkey children.
  - Handling the multiple roles of the single parent.

INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

Schools can facilitate the involvement of single and working parents in their children's education by seeking cooperation and collaboration with resources in the community.

- Approach human service, cultural, social, and other organizations to suggest the development of programs and services that meet the needs of children and parents.
- Enlist the aid of high school students and senior citizens with whom before and after school recreational and child care programs can be developed.
- Form partnerships with organizations that can provide programs for children.
- Work with employers to encourage them to institute flexible hours for working parents who want to attend school activities.
- Use a variety of approaches to enable as many parents and children as possible to benefit from these programs.

APPENDIX H

PERMISSION LETTER-DIMIDJIAN

August 24, 1992 Florida International University

Ann Gaffuri
51 Bailou Street
Quincy, MASS 02169

Dear Ann,

This note is to give formal permission for you to cite Figure 3 on Page 46 in my NEA book EARLY CHILDHOOD AT RISK with the understanding that you will credit my conceptualization and then discuss it in your report. Also, also Figure 4 on Page 47.

Sincerely,

Victoria Jean Dimidjian, Ph.D.
Professor, Early Childhood Education
Chair, Dept. of Elementary Education

P/S: Ann, This is a pre. Andrews letter - what a time this is for us here! Love ya - Vick.

Office of the Chairperson • Department of Elementary Education • College of Education
University Park, Miami, Florida 33199 • (305) 348-2561 • FAX (305) 348-3205